

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL AND  
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL  
DURBAN, 6041  
SOUTH AFRICA

**“We want to live a better life like other people”  
SELF-ASSESSED DEVELOPMENT  
NEEDS OF RURAL WOMEN IN  
NDWEDWE, KWAZULU-NATAL**

Ayanda Sotshongaye and Valerie Møller

CSDS Working Paper No. 16

**CENTRE FOR SOCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**



**UNIVERSITY OF NATAL DURBAN**

*“We Want To Live A Better Life  
Like Other People”*

**SELF-ASSESSED DEVELOPMENT  
NEEDS OF RURAL WOMEN IN  
NDWEDWE, KWAZULU-NATAL.**

Ayanda Sotshongaye and Valerie Møller

**Centre for Social and Development Studies  
University of Natal, Durban 4041**

1997

CSDS Working Paper No. 16

The Centre for Social and Development Studies was established in 1988 through the merger of the Centre for Applied Social Sciences and the Development Studies Unit. The purpose of the Centre is to focus university research in such a way as to make it relevant to the needs of the surrounding developing communities, to generate general awareness of development problems and to assist in aiding the process of appropriate development planning.

ISBN No: 1-86840-263-0

### **Acknowledgements**

This research was undertaken under the auspices of the Quality of Life & RDP Monitoring Unit which receives core funding from the Human Sciences Research Council. The authors gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Human Sciences Research Council for this project. The assistance of the Department of Agriculture in contacting the women's clubs in Ndwedwe is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks also go to colleagues in the Centre for Social and Development Studies at the University of Natal who commented on earlier drafts of this report.

---

## INTRODUCTION

---

*"Rural people and rural women in particular, bear the largest burden of poverty in South Africa. If we can change the inequalities and inefficiencies of the past, rural areas can become productive and sustainable" (President Mandela, Government Gazette, 1995:5).*

Three quarters of the poor people in South Africa live in rural areas. Rural people, especially households headed by women, are the most impoverished group (Ministry of the Office of the President, 1995). Women are underemployed and socially and economically disadvantaged (Hirshman, 1995). Although the former government failed to address women's issues in general and rural women's issues in particular, there is hope that the present government will address their needs and help them escape poverty. The focus of this paper is on rural women's roles in development and their opportunities for empowerment. It reports a case study conducted in two tribal wards in Ndwedwe, KwaZulu-Natal, which inquired into rural women's development needs and their perceptions of the opportunities to address these needs. The paper is divided into three sections. The first section starts with a brief review of the literature, by way of introduction, and the problem statement. The second section describes the research setting and details the methodology used to inquire into women's development needs. The third section reports findings and discusses the implications of the findings for women's empowerment.

---

## LITERATURE REVIEW

---

### **Rural women and development**

Moghadam (1992:244) argues that development is about creating a conducive environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests. She points out that development is about people and society, quality of life, and the enlargement of human capabilities. Development enables people to have choices, she continues, and allows for political

freedom, human rights, and self respect. Development necessarily includes access to resources for a decent standard of living and education.

Friedman (1989) argues that there is a good chance that rural women can escape poverty if they are given an opportunity to participate in the development process, including being a party to decisions about what development intervention should occur and how needs will be satisfied.

Rural communities tend to be among the most underdeveloped ones. Research indicates that resources tend to be very scarce in rural communities and unequally distributed. Services seldom reach the poorest of the poor. Development requires the upgrading of the rural communities where poor people live. This involves addressing the needs of poor people by providing them with the necessary skills to help meet their needs, especially basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. For the development process to work effectively in the rural communities, the process itself must be designed and implemented within a framework of understanding how the basic socio-economic unit, the family, functions among the poor (Charlton, 1984).

Women need to be given equal power in development planning structures, and this can help them to meet their needs. Development has increased the work load of rural women as their husbands work away from home in the cities (Friedman, 1989). In Africa, women contribute more to agriculture than men and their working hours are longer than men's (Bryceson, 1995).

### **Women in the home**

The literature assigns three main development tasks to women in the family. Rural women in developing countries are responsible for household chores, child care and agricultural activities. Men rarely participate in the housework in rural areas. Rural women grow crops such as maize and vegetables to feed their families and cannot afford to buy expensive food from the market (Murphy, 1991). The work load of rural women is heavy due to the lack of household appliances and other services (Budlender, 1991). Another burden they are faced with is the

lack of clean water. Rural women spend several hours each day in unpaid labour fetching water from the river and fire wood from the forest (World Bank Report, 1990). In addition, many rural women do not have access to electricity. In spite of their responsible role in development, however, the former South African government discriminated against women and failed to address their issues.

Rural women spend a good deal of time looking for fire wood or cow dung for use as fuel for cooking food. This is a slow procedure which consumes a large part of their time (Green and Spalding, 1992:5). This hard work also makes women suffer physically and emotionally and prevents them from participating in political life and from having an influence in changing the policies which affect them (Moghadam, 1992). Carrying heavy loads of wood from the forest or big buckets of water from the river can cause damage to the spinal cord, which can lead to problems with child bearing (Dankelman and Davidson (1988) cited in Murphy, 1991). If the family is big, the demands on women increase. Economic productivity may be reduced when bearing and rearing children. It is also argued that women's presence at home is very important because they are the ones who teach children the values and customs of the family (Green and Spalding, 1992). The role of custodian of traditional customs is frequently assigned to older women.

Rural people do have the advantage of owning fields and gardens, which enables them to cultivate crops. Most South African rural households plant gardens and some also have access to larger fields. In most developing countries, women are the principal producers of food crops (Pala, 1976). Rural women grow food for home consumption and for sale (Patel, 1996). Although selling vegetables and fruit is not as economically profitable as more formal types of employment, involvement in agricultural activities gives rural women economic independence and increases the respect they receive from the family (Green, 1992).

While rural women frequently engage in community development projects, many of these (road construction, agricultural projects, etc.) are designed by men and are not necessarily beneficial for women. The development projects aimed at women typically involve teaching them

to weave baskets, sew clothes or bake, while men are trained to use machinery. In general, women are taught less profitable skills than men (Parpart, 1993). Women need to be taught skills to increase their productivity in alternative activities, which might offer them more economic and personal support (Kandiyoti (1990) cited in Parpart, 1993:452). Women need to be given an opportunity to develop ideas about what will really improve their lives. They need to be given the opportunity to analyse their situation, to look for the solutions to their problems, and to establish how outside agencies can facilitate the development process.

---

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

---

This study aimed to give rural women an opportunity to discuss their roles in development, to identify the opportunities for personal empowerment, and to locate constraints on progress in achieving development goals. Two wards in Ndwedwe were selected in which women were involved in development projects. These development projects, especially the community gardens, were initiated and supervised by extension officers from the Department of Agriculture, which has offices in the Ndwedwe District.

---

## **RESEARCH SETTING**

---

Ndwedwe District is formally a tribal area, previously designated as part of the KwaZulu homeland under the last government. It is made up of one large block of land lying south of the Maphumulo District east of the Camperdown District, west of Tongaat and Verulam and north of Pinetown District. There are 18 tribal wards in Ndwedwe District (Jali, 1995:2). According to the 1991 census, the total population of Ndwedwe was 318 093, with women outnumbering men in the ratio of 56:44. An estimated 83 percent of women and 84 percent of men aged 18 to 64 have less than a Standard 5 education, and only 17 percent of females and 16 percent of males in that age group have a Standard 10 education. It is estimated that less than 10 percent of dwellings in the area are formal housing units, and economically active people account for only 31 percent of the total population. (1991 Census).

The people of Ndwedwe depend greatly on agriculture for survival and the main agricultural enterprises involve fruit production e.g. bananas, avocados, pawpaws, oranges, lemons and mangoes. Maize, beans, madumbes and sweet potatoes are grown by individual farmers. Cattle, goats and sheep are also kept but not for commercial purposes. Other macro enterprises include sewing, candle making and block-making organised by clubs. There are 347 community vegetable gardens and 149 women's clubs in Ndwedwe (Jali, 1995).

The district of Ndwedwe was considered an ideal setting for purposes of the study. The GIS Unit (Geographic Information System) at Human Sciences Research Council identified Ndwedwe as one of the most marginalised and impoverished districts in KwaZulu-Natal, although it is situated within an hour's drive from the city of Durban. As mentioned earlier, the 1991 Census showed that Ndwedwe has a higher number of females than males. Women, especially rural women, are believed to be the most exploited and marginalised people in South African society. Currently, there are a number of development projects taking place in Ndwedwe in which women are involved. The study tries to elicit women's assessment of how their participation in these projects has improved their living conditions and their self-confidence.

### **Description of the wards under study**

Within Ndwedwe, two wards i.e. Mavela and Cibane, were selected for the research (see map). The wards differed in terms of living standards and proximity to transport routes. Mavela Ward is a big area with a total population of 15 064 (1991 Census). It acts as a service centre and the offices of the Department of Agriculture and the Teacher's Circuit Office are located there. Electricity and water are supplied in some homes. There are both primary and secondary schools and a crèche in Mavela. There are also a clinic, a police station and a taxi rank. The closest town is Verulam which lies only 20 kilometres away.

In contrast to Mavela Ward, Cibane Ward is very remote and has a total population of only 3 091 (1991 Census). Cibane Ward has a clinic and a primary school. Transport is infrequent, as the Ward is served by a



single bus and the road is bad. It is located about 100 kilometres from Verulam.

## **Methodology**

The data for this study were collected in May 1996, just before the Local Government Elections which were held in June 1996. The researcher collected the data with assistance from the Department of Agriculture, which provided access to the community. Two extension officers from the Department accompanied the researcher to the meeting place where she conducted interviews with different categories of women selected for this study. Non-club members were also part of the study and were recruited by the club members. Open-ended questions were used to generate the discussion among the participants. Focus group interviews were applied to probe the deeper-seated opinions and attitudes of the women in the study (Knodel, 1995).

Group dynamics play an important role in focus interviews (Krueger, 1988). Participants respond to ideas and comments thrown up by others in the discussion group. Krueger (1988) argues that the results of focus groups have face validity. Results are immediately accessible. They are not presented in complicated statistical charts, but rather in lay terminology with quotations from group participants. Focus groups produce rich data and are cost-efficient. Although the ideal group interview is with 5 to 10 participants, the experienced researcher can interview up to twelve participants at a time and still collect detailed information.

Eight focus groups were conducted for this study. Five focus groups were with women from the larger Mavela Ward and three focus groups were with women from Cibane Ward. Each group consisted of five members. The purpose of the study was explained to the women and the researcher stressed the confidentiality of their responses and that anonymity would be preserved. The researcher encouraged the club members to break the silence and talk about their constraints, opportunities and development needs. Probing questions were asked where the women gave vague responses to a question. Each interview took approximately one hour and thirty minutes and all interviews were

tape recorded. The researcher translated the interviews from Zulu into English and prepared the transcripts, which served as the database for the study.

An interviewer guideline was prepared in advance. The main questions put to the women concerned their important roles in development in the family and the community; perceptions of living conditions and the good and the bad things about living in Mavela and Cibane; problems experienced in community upgrading projects; and development priorities for their area.

---

## RESULTS

---

### Subjects

The study included 40 women, 25 from Mavela ward and 15 from Cibane ward. Approximately two thirds of the women were club members. In the Mavela subsample, the majority of women involved in agriculture were 60 years old and above. In the Cibane subsample, the majority of agriculturists were between 40 and 55 years. The highest number (13) of widows was also found in the Mavela sample with 5 widows between ages 41 - 59 and 8 widows above 60 years of age. Education levels were higher in Mavela than in the remote area of Cibane. About 6 interviewees from Mavela had achieved a Standard 7 or higher level of education whereas at Cibane ward, only three subjects reported less than standard 5 education. The women from Mavela without formal education were all older people over 51 years.

Subjects of this study reported pensions, selling activities and family earnings as their main sources of income. Due to the age differences between the subsamples, state old age pensions were one of the most important sources of income for the Mavela women. In the Mavela subsample, 11 older women were receiving pensions and one 54 year old woman was receiving a disability grant. Out of 3 women who were 60 years and older in the Cibane group, only one woman was receiving a pension, while the other two were still struggling to access theirs. About 24 women in the Mavela subsample reported that they were

selling crops. Some women in this group were also selling sugar cane to white farmers and hawking. Only 4 Cibane women reported that they were involved in selling activities: two women were selling crops at pension points and locally and the other two were selling craft work e.g. grass mats, necklaces and belts made of beads. Only one Cibane woman reported that she was selling her labour by hoeing other peoples' gardens and fields and getting paid R5 a day or a basin of maize or beans.

In the Mavela subsample, 17 out of 25 reported that they were receiving money from their families. For instance: 4 women said they were receiving money from their husbands; 8 women from their children; 3 women from their parents and siblings; and 2 women from their parents in-law. About 7 Cibane women said they were supported by their husbands. In two cases the husbands were pensioners, while one woman was supported by her parents who were pensioners. Two single women aged 20 - 30 years from the Mavela subsample were getting support from the fathers of their children. One middle-aged woman from Cibane sample was getting support from her boyfriend who was a pensioner.

The majority of the women in both wards were living in large households. The households of the participants included husbands, children, grandchildren, siblings, parents, nieces, nephews and in-laws, other relatives and non-relatives. The average household size was 8.32 for Mavela women and 7.8 for Cibane women. Mavela women were more likely to live in extended families than Cibane women. About 80 percent of the Cibane women were living only with children.

The majority (31) of women from both wards reported that they were living in their birth communities. Six women had come to Mavela and Cibane when they got married and 3 other women had taken refuge in the area because of violence. Both Mavela and Cibane were considered to be peaceful areas. At Mavela Ward, the majority reported that they lived in houses constructed with mud blocks, cement and corrugated iron and only 5 participants lived in traditional huts. At Cibane Ward, all the participants were living in traditional huts and the majority of these huts were poorly constructed.

**Table 1: Sample characteristics**

	Mavela Ward		Cibane Ward		Total	
<b>Number of interviewees</b>	25		15		40	
<b>Club membership</b>	15		10		25	
<b>Average age in years</b>	52.9		47.3		50.8	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Marital status:</b>						
Married widows	9	36	8	53	17	43
	13	52	4	27	17	43
<b>Education:</b>						
None	6	24	12	80	18	45
Standard 7 or more	6	24	0	0	6	15
<b>Sources of income:</b>						
Pension	12	48	1	6.7	13	32
Selling activities	24	96	4	27	26	.5
Family contributions in cash and kind	17	68	9	60	26	65
						65
<b>Average household size</b>	8.32		7.8		8.1	
<b>Housing:</b>						
Traditional huts only	5	20	15	100	20	50

### **Development roles in the home**

All participants were asked about how they saw their importance in the family. The participants stated that women played important nurturing roles in the family in spite of many obstacles. The women felt empowered because they took responsibility for important decisions about the future of their children. For example, the women saw themselves as responsible for making sure that their children got an education.

*"Mothers are very important because, even with the needs of the home, even with children, it is the mother who decides what she can do with the children. It is a mother's duty to make sure that children go to*

*school and their school fees are paid. If you ask money from your husband, he is going to tell you that he does not have it. But mothers are able to take this and that to help the child go to school" (Mavela married woman, 9).*

*"I can say mothers are very important because, if the child is sick, it is the mother who notices that first before the father can see that. Also, if the child needs something, she or he asks it from the mother and the mother will go to the father and ask for it" (Cibane married woman, 11).*

Participants saw themselves as important in the home because in addition to their traditional roles as women, they also played a traditionally male role, that of supporting the family.

*"We are the most important people at home because we are also helping our husbands in supporting the family. We have clubs, we grow vegetables and feed the family." (Mavela married pensioner, 1)*

As most of the women in the study had no formal employment, they spent a good deal of time in the fields, planting crops to feed their families. The women also referred to their roles in the kitchen. They cooked for the family, a task which the husbands did not do. Cooking for the family made women feel good about themselves, because they had something to contribute to family well-being, even if they were not employed. The women with unemployed husbands reported that they, the women, were the ones who had to go out and look for food, while their husbands did nothing to help at home.

*"We are very important because, when it comes to food, mothers play a big role on what has to be cooked for the family. Even if you have a husband, he can only give you money and you as a mother have to decide on how to use it in meeting family needs" (Mavela widowed pensioner, 6).*

*"I am the only one supporting my family because my husband is unemployed. He is seated at home, doing nothing. I am the only one*

*who is going out, trying to make a living for my family" (Mavela married woman, 32).*

### **Development roles in the community**

All the women who participated saw themselves as important members of their communities. Women who were club members reported that they chose to form clubs to help and develop the community and their families. Women who were not club members also felt that they played an important role in the community because they bought items to sell to local people. Both club and non-club members said that they sold any excess produce grown to the community. If the yield was poor, it was used for family consumption only. Grandmothers reported that they were very important in the community because they were the ones who teach children respect and how to behave.

*"In this community, women are the ones who have sewing clubs; garden clubs and these clubs are very helpful in the community" (Mavela, married pensioner, 1).*

*"Women are very important in the community because in this area, there is a crèche now and the idea that there is a need for a crèche came from women" (Mavela, widowed woman, 5).*

*"Grandmothers are very important in the community because if there are ritual celebrations of ukwemula (equivalent to the 21st birthday), they help the families to do it because they know the traditional customs" (Mavela, married woman, 36).*

*"Grandmothers are important in the community because they are the ones who are teaching the young ones the Zulu customs so that they don't lose them. Even if there is a ritual feast, they are the ones who know the way to run the feast, and how the ancestors (amadlozi) are called upon so that they can come and accept and bless the feast" (Mavela widowed pensioner, 39).*

The club members in the study said they felt very strongly about their important roles in the community. They saw themselves as the ones who

are trying to develop their communities by forming community projects which aim to empower rural women. Their involvement in the projects made them well-known public figures. They were role models for other people who are not sure of what action to take in order to survive. In this way, women's clubs encouraged the community to work together to further their development.

### **Improving living standards**

Participants were asked about the things that they do to better their standard of living. They reported that they spent much of their time on household chores and nurturing children. They were also involved in agricultural activities, because there was no other reliable source of income.

### **Income generating tasks**

**Mavela.** Most of the Mavela women were self-employed, either selling crops grown in their fields and in community gardens; or retailing inexpensive clothes they bought in Durban. Others exchanged produce for second-hand clothes to be resold. The women sold their wares locally, at pension points and in the market place at Verulam. There was not much profit from sales, but the women said they continued to sell because they did not have any other means of generating money. The profit margins were low because many people in their communities were also involved in agricultural activities and they all grew similar crops. In addition, there was no market place in Mavela and they were forced to travel far to sell their produce in the neighbouring town of Verulam. Even the women who grew sugar cane for white farmers were not satisfied with the profit they made.

*"My husband buys clothes from cheap stores in Durban and I sell them to grandmothers on pension pay day. I also go to the market to sell avocado pears and whatever crops we have at that time" (Mavela married club member, 9).*

*"I sell vegetables and fruits at the market place. I also take a bag of my crops to Indian homes to exchange for second hand clothes. I sell these clothes locally" (Mavela single non-club member, 31).*

*"We feel bad when we grow vegetables and when they are ready, we find that we have produced a lot and we end up not knowing where to sell the vegetables because there are many clubs which are doing gardening and we grow similar crops. In other times the crops get rotten because no one buys them or because we don't have the transport to take them to the market, this is really the problem " (Mavela married club member, 10).*

*"All our money is taken by the white farmers. They asked us to plant sugar cane and we are doing that. When it is ready, they come and harvest it and pay us little money. We don't get any profit" (Mavela widowed non-club member, 26).*

One of the Mavela women, who is a widowed pensioner and a club member, reported that she owns a Spaza shop. She sells vegetables, fruits and sweets to keep herself occupied but she makes little profit.

*"I am trying to develop myself by buying candles and other small things and sell them here. But what is turning me down is that, people come here and ask me to give them certain things that I am selling on credit and promise me to pay back on a certain day. I will then wait and wait and wait for these people to pay me because they have taken the profit I am supposed to get. They pay me when they feel like doing that. But even under these conditions I cannot give up selling. I don't have money to open a big business. I am selling paraffin, candles, sweets, salt, simba chips" (Mavela widowed pensioner, 8).*

**Cibane.** The majority of Cibane women used their crops exclusively for home consumption. Only two club members reported that they were selling crops in the community and at the pension pay points. One woman said that she hoed other peoples' gardens and fields and was paid five rand a day or a basin of maize or beans. She either ate these vegetables or planted them in her own field. Two Cibane women said that they wove traditional mats as a way of generating income. They



complained that they spent much time weaving the mats but made little profit. The mats were sold locally and at the Durban station.

*"I don't have a husband, my child, but I am trying. I weave grass mats and sell them and the vegetables. If I get money, I use it for my children's school fees. I also use the money to buy seeds for my garden plots" (Cibane widowed club member, 17).*

*"I braid women's heads and it's ten rand per head. This money helps me to buy small things that I need at home. I also make necklaces and belts with beads (ubuhlali isibhambha) and I sell them for ten rand each. I weave grass mats and each mat starts from twenty five rand and goes up depending on the size of a mat and the decorations I make. These things enable me to maintain my family" (Cibane married club member, 21).*

*"I help people by hoeing their fields and they pay me five rand per day. I go home and buy small things that I need. My children are scholars, I pay their school fees with the money that I get from hoeing the fields" (Cibane single club member, 24).*

### **Successful projects**

The women were asked about the success of their community projects. The club members from Mavela reported that their community projects were doing well, especially the community gardens. The women found these projects rewarding because they were able to wake up in the morning like any employed person and go to work in their community gardens. They said this gives them satisfaction because they are doing something, no matter how little they produce. The support they get from other women while working in their community gardens boosts their morale and makes them feel confident about their projects. The community gardens enabled the women to meet some of their basic needs because they use their crops for both food consumption and for commercial purposes. The women were also aware of the fact that vegetables were good for their health, and this kept their confidence high.

*"I think we are doing a great job because we no longer take a taxi to Verulam to buy a cabbage. If you don't have enough money, you go to your garden and dig carrots or fetch a cabbage. And people who don't have vegetable gardens, we see them coming to us to buy our cabbage and we have been telling them to come and join our club. Gardening is really a great thing because you don't die of hunger. If you don't have food, you go to your garden and get cabbage. That is why we are saying gardening is great because we grow vegetables which have irons that fight Kwashiorkor.....There is nothing that you can get if you do nothing and just sit at home. It is good to work for yourself and not to depend on somebody"(Mavela club member, 1).*

*"We are doing a successful job in gardening. If there is no drought right through the year, I get more vegetables and I sell them in the market, and the profit I get helps me in supporting my family. Other women are sewing, others are baking biscuits. This shows that we are getting there though we sometimes end up not having enough money to improve (thuthuka) ourselves in this area and to do all we want to do in our club. But what we are doing now is what we can afford to do" (Mavela club member, 3).*

The community gardens were reportedly more helpful to the women than the sewing and baking projects. The reason given was that vegetable seeds are less expensive compared to sewing and baking materials.

### **Problems experienced by club members**

**Mavela.** Participants were asked about the problems they had experienced with their community projects. Club members from Mavela reported that their community gardening project was going well for them, although they were not making sufficient profit to meet all their families' basic needs. Other community projects such as sewing and baking were less successful.

In both instances, the major problems had been lack of equipment and resources. The women reported lacking access to sewing machines and

ovens, funds to buy materials, and a suitable venue for production. The two club members below expressed confidence that their projects would succeed with injections of capital. However, the lack of capital resources and markets were seen as major problems for all community projects.

*"We are not winning because with sewing, we need the fabric. We are unable to buy the fabric because we don't have money. We have very little money which can help us with our daily needs. If we can get money to buy the fabric, sewing can be very successful because we will be sewing school uniforms. But we can't do that because we don't have money to buy the fabric"(Mavela club member, 1).*

*"I sew and grow vegetables and fruits. Our problem is money. We are working very hard, but what we are doing is not taking us anywhere because we don't have the means, we don't have the money. We really want to succeed but money is a problem. You do things with money, if money is not enough, as I said most of us are widows, and for those who are not widows, their husbands are not working. So, we don't succeed in what we are doing. If we can get money, we will be successful in this club"(Mavela club member, 4).*

The Mavela women are more fortunate than the Cibane women in that a nearby dam provides water for their community garden. Fetching water is an arduous task, especially for older women.

*"What makes me feel unhappy is this problem of carrying big baskets of water to irrigate our vegetable plots. I don't have the power to carry a basket of water at all. When we fetch water to irrigate our vegetables, like cabbage and carrots, we have to carry big baskets of water to water our crops and we cannot run away from that because they need water. If we can have the energy to buy the irrigator, this will really make things easy for us. I am old, my legs are not very strong. We walk and walk a very long distance carrying water until you feel that your legs cannot move any further, it's like you can fall down. But because we like to work in order to earn a living, we don't have a choice, so this makes me unhappy" (63 year old Mavela club member, 2).*

**Cibane.** Club members from Cibane reported that their only community project, a community garden, was not yet a success despite the fact that it was in its second year. In order to achieve success, the women said they required continued assistance from the Department of Agriculture whose extension officers had encouraged them to form community gardening clubs. The women did not feel confident in their gardening skills at present. They seemed to lack commitment and felt discouraged. Lack of money to buy seeds and fertilisers were further problems experienced by the women.

*“The problem that we have in our club is that people from the Agriculture Department came here and asked us to join clubs and work in community gardens planting vegetables. Nobody came to show us how to plant vegetables. We are just doing something we are not sure of or something we copy from other community gardens in other communities. We are trying to plant our vegetable seeds in a straight line, but others are still struggling. If we try to show them how to make a straight line, they refuse, telling us not to show them because we also don't know. There are also times, when we have to collect money for a club member who is going to attend a meeting in another community, other members don't pay saying that they don't have money and they are going to pay later when they have it. All these things draws us back from what we are doing” (Cibane club member, 24).*

### **Perceptions of the living conditions: advantages and disadvantages**

Participants were asked about how they feel about living in the rural area. The majority (31 women) reported that they liked living in their communities because they were born there or had moved there after marriage (6 women).

Three women had fled the violence in their rural home areas and had found a peaceful area in Ndwedwe. In the women's opinion, the soil in Mavela and Cibane tribal wards was very rich and suitable for agriculture. The women wanted to grow food in order to avoid buying expensive items from the shops. In rural areas, they said, poor people

could make ends meet if they grew maize, beans and other crops in their gardens. Some women stated that township people bought everything from the shops because they did not have land to grow crops. They did not want to live the kind of life that township people lead, they asserted. The women opted for a rural and traditional lifestyle. All women preferred to live in the rural area where the cost of living is lower.

*"We like this area because we were born here. All the things that are happening here are the things that were happening when we grew up. Like planting the fields, fetching fire wood from the forest etc. These things are the things that were happening when we grew up. They were done by our mothers" (Cibane club member, 11).*

*"To be honest I like this area of Ndwedwe a lot. Even if your yard is small, you are able to grow vegetables and fruit because the soil is rich and you can eat these crops with your children"(Mavela club member, 7).*

*"This area is under a chief. We don't die of hunger because there is no job for us or for our children. We don't die of hunger because we work very hard, cultivating our fields, and eat the crops and sometimes sell them in order to earn a living"(Mavela non-club member, 30).*

*"The good thing about living in this area is that, if I am not sick, I go to my field and plant crops. If I managed to produce more crops, I take them to the market and sell and this helps me to buy clothes. This area is not like other areas, in town for instance, where people depend on buying from the shops because they live in small yards and they don't have gardens" (Mavela club member, 2).*

*"Its nice to live here because we eat meat when our neighbours have slaughtered a cow. We eat a lot of meat" (Mavela non-club member, 26).*

*"What is good about living in this area is that we don't pay house rates or the electricity bill or for water at the end of the month" (Mavela non-club member, 29).*

---

## PERCEPTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

---

Women were asked to prioritise development needs in their wards. The development needs reported by these women included: access to services such as water and sanitation, transport, electricity, housing, welfare, schools and police protection. The women were aware of development occurring in neighbouring communities and stated that they would like their areas to be developed as well.

### **Water and sanitation**

All the participants reported that they need piped water in their communities. In Mavela, piped water was supplied to households which could pay for the labour and materials required. The women were not happy about this procedure. They said they did not understand why they were expected to pay connection fees, as they had never paid for water in the past. Some women had managed to pay the connection fee and the water tap was placed near the main road. They were unhappy that piped water would be supplied to their homes only when they paid an additional fee.

*"As we are staying in this area , we have problems with water. Water is costing us a lot of money now. We used to go to the river and pay nothing. We see water as costing now. If we ask the developers to put a water tap next to your home, they charge us a lot of money and we want water next to our homes because we don't have the energy to carry water from the river. They asked us to pay R250 for water and they put it far from your home, in the road. When you ask them to put a water tap in your house, they want another payment which is R500 or R600 in order to do it for you. Money is a big problem to us and we want to have things"(Mavela non-club member, 26).*

*"This makes me unhappy my child because we don't have water, we don't have anything because I cannot afford R250 for water. Where am I going to get it from? I am still going to drink water with cows down in the river until I die because I will never have this money because I am unemployed and my husband is unemployed too. Where am I going to*

*get this R250 and R800 to get a water tap in my home. Things are very difficult in rural areas, they don't develop us" (Mavela non-club member, 27).*

On the other hand, the Cibane women said they still fetched water from the river far away from their homes because there was no piped water in their community. The women were not happy about the water they drink because it was not clean and they reported suffering from diseases like cholera and diarrhoea.

*"We need water near our homes. We fetch water very far from our homes. We walk many kilometres to the river. You walk and rest for a moment and walk again and rest and walk again until you get to the river. We drink this water from Amatata river and it is not clean. If it is raining, the water becomes dirty and changes its colour. But we drink it under those conditions" (Cibane club member, 12).*

*"We fetch water very far from our homes in the river and this water is dirty. This makes us sick and we go to the hospital suffering from Cholera because of this dirty water we are drinking. We need water taps and to live a better life like other people" (Cibane club member, 14).*

*"We drink dirty smelling water. We drink water, and donkeys, cattle drink in the same river that we use. These animals urinate in this water, but there is nothing that we can do, we use this water. Now we are suffering from diarrhoea and asthma because of this water. We are really suffering my child" (Cibane club member, 21).*

## **Sanitation**

The researcher asked the participants if they had toilets in their homes. Mavela women stated that their toilets were pole and dagga structures. During heavy rains the latrines got washed away by the floods because they were not properly built. On the other hand, the majority of Cibane women had no toilets at all. A 33 year old married woman stated: *"We don't have toilets here. We go under the trees" (11).* In spite of the inadequacy of sanitation facilities, all the women agreed that toilets were not a major development priority.

*"We need toilets because we don't have well built toilets. The toilets that we have are built by us and they are not in good condition. As they have brought water in our area, we hope that we are going to have nice toilets. But we don't want this area to be a township. We are afraid of living in a township because we survive by planting crops in our fields. That is why we don't think about other things like toilets because, if this area can become a township, in townships people are paying for everything. That can change our lives and we are poor, we earn a living by planting our fields. The government can help us in this area and make it a better place"(Mavela non-club member, 31).*

*"Others do have toilets in their homes and others don't. Our toilets are poorly constructed like our huts. We don't have money to pay the contractors. This means that if we are to get nice toilets, we must first get nice houses so that when you look at your home you see a beautiful home"(Cibane club member, 24).*

## **Electricity**

Most of the Mavela women had electricity installed in their homes. Meters had been installed at a cost of R45. Some had paid their installation fee but were still waiting for the developers to make the connection. Some women whose homes were equipped with electricity, were now interested in street lighting to increase security. The women appreciated the installation of electricity, and said that it had made their life easier. They used electricity for cooking and for ironing clothes. They no longer spent many hours looking for firewood and cow dung.

*"We don't have electricity like in other homes. Developers have installed electricity in certain homes and jump other homes and go on to other homes. We don't know what is causing that, we all want electricity"(Mavela club member, 5).*

*"I have got electricity at home, but our streets are very dark. We really wish to have electricity in our street, but we don't know how are we going to get it. You can even be hurt by a criminal because it is very dark in our streets"(Mavela club member, 8).*



Access to fuel was a major problem for the Cibane women. They used firewood and dung for cooking. There were no forests near Cibane and they had to walk long distances in order to collect firewood from a forest far from their area. They had difficulties in finding cow dung because local people no longer keep cattle as they had in former times. Some impoverished families had sold their cattle to make ends meet. Other participants' cows had died during the drought. Some Cibane women used dry maize stalks to make a cooking fire. Others used paraffin stoves.

*"I would like the government to install electricity in our area"*(Cibane club member, 12).

*"For cooking, we use firewood and we fetch it from the forest and it is very far. You walk a long distance to the forest. You spend the whole day looking for firewood"*(Cibane club member, 15).

## **Housing**

The housing situation was more favourable in Mavela than in Cibane. The majority (20) of the Mavela women lived in homes built of mud bricks. Some of these houses were reinforced with cement. A 22 year old non club member stated:

*At home there is a house built of cement blocks. We did that with the help of my mother's pension money and the money that we get from selling in the market" (30).*

All the Cibane women lived in traditional huts. Most of these huts were poorly constructed. A 61 year old non pensioner from Cibane referred to her home as a shack: *"Oh, you are better because you sleep inside your hut. What about me, who is using old bags to close the cracks and holes in the wall of my hut. We don't have properly built homes, we live in shacks" (21).* When the heavy rains came, the huts were washed away and had to be rebuilt. The women complained that they had no money to rebuild their huts and asked the government for assistance.

*"Our houses are very bad. We build them with mud bricks. When the rain comes, they fall down. We use grass mats (*amacansi*) as a door to*

*shut our huts. We want the government to help us in building our homes because they are falling down. One time, we were asked to forward our complaints to the government and we asked the government to give us jobs so that we can build proper houses, but nothing has happened yet. We don't get any help here. Our huts are down. We use sticks and poles to protect them from heavy winds. We really do forward our grievances to the government but we don't get any help" (Cibane club member, 11)*

## **Employment**

None of the women interviewed had formal employment. The women maintained their families with pension money, agricultural produce and profits from trading. Some women received family contributions in cash and kind to make ends meet. They stated that lack of job opportunities was a big frustration for the whole family. Their children and husbands could not find work. The women said they were looking for work nearby because they had young children to look after. They did not wish to look for work in town. The women called for the government to encourage industries to come to Ndwedwe to provide local jobs. The women were willing to take any type of work, even hard labour, as long as they were paid at the end of the day.

*"What we are not happy about is that our children are not working. There are no factories here. Children have now learnt to steal other people's things. As we are here now, people are crying, criminals have broken into their home and stole TV's, hi fi sets and other things. These children have nothing to do during the day because they are unemployed, so they break into other people's homes. Other children have completed Standard 10 and they are sitting at home because they cannot find a job. This makes them wild"(Mavela club member, 4).*

*"As we have small children, I wish that the government will build factories in this area so that we can go there and work and come home in the afternoon. We have a problem as women, if you have to work in Durban, that means you have to leave your small children and go there. This is a problem to us because we cannot leave our children alone and work far from home. We live under a big pressure because this makes us unable to satisfy all the needs of the family"(Mavela club member, 10).*

*"We need the government to give us jobs and work. They can see that we are hard workers. We do have things that we like to do but the problem is money. You wish to build a homestead, but you can't because you don't have money. You end up sleeping in a hut that you don't like because you don't have money to build a nice home. When you ask a person to build you a hut made up of mud bricks and pole, they charge us a lot of money. This forces us to live in bad small huts like a bird's nest. Even if I go out in the field to cut the grass that is used for roofing, I am still going to pay the person who is going to do the roofing for me because I cannot do the roofing and I don't have a husband. So, the grass will stay there for months and get rotten because people want money when they do a job for you and I don't have money"(Cibane non-club member, 16).*

*"The government must give us jobs to work in this area.... It can be agricultural work or to work in the road or to make dams and so on. It can be anything that the government can offer us"(Cibane non-club member, 20).*

## **Transport**

Women in both areas identified tarred access and community roads as a development priority. The Mavela women had fairly good access to public transport. Their main transport problem was that the taxis dropped passengers in the main road far from their homes because there were no internal roads. The women had to walk a long distance from the drop off point often carrying heavy parcels with purchases made in town.

*"The road is a very big problem my child because we people of Ndwedwe, you can tell that this person comes from Ndwedwe. When you arrive at Verulam, your hair, clothes, shoes, everything will be full of dust because of the road. There is no tar and this makes us unhappy. Ndwedwe is a very old area but it does not develop. The road is really a problem and cars get broken because of this road "(Mavela non-club member, 26).*

The Cibane women were dependent on one bus which leaves very early in the morning and comes back late in the afternoon. The bus does not enter the ward. The access road is a gravel road. If it rains excessively, the roads are impassable and the bus does not operate at all.

*"The government must build roads, we need a tarred road. If it is raining, we suffer a lot because you have to walk a long distance to another community where the road is better. If there is a person who is sick, she or he can die in your house because we don't have a tarred road and if it is raining, there is no way that you will get transport to take you to the hospital!"(Cibane club member, 11).*

## **Education**

The majority of Mavela women had at least primary education. There were very few women with no education and all of those were older people. Some of the Mavela women expressed a need for basic adult education to upgrade their education and give them the skills to find jobs. The Mavela women were also very concerned about the lack of local tertiary institutions for their children to study further.

*"The thing that I see as not going well for us is that we don't have tertiary schools here. I see children with Standard 10 suffering here. This forces them to leave home and study far from home, using a lot of money. If we can get tertiary institutions in this area, things will be better. I also see children with Standard 10 seated at home. They cannot go any further, you as a parent also don't know what to do because you wish your child to go further with her or his studies, but you also cannot afford the fees if you don't have money"(Mavela non-club member, 33).*

*"We also need a school for old people. We wish to have the school because we did not finish our studies, we left school. Now we want to further our studies. We heard that in other communities there are schools for old people but we do not have such a school here"( 48 year old Mavela non-club member, 34).*

The Cibane women were more concerned about educational opportunities for their children than for themselves. They complained

about the lack of secondary schools in their area. They had to send their children to other communities for secondary schooling which was very expensive.

*"The government must build schools for our children so that they do not suffer from renting at other people's homes because there is no high school in this area. If your child is at secondary school you really suffer. You have to pay the rent for the accommodation as your child will be forced to leave home and stay in another community which has a high school. Transport is also a problem because you have to pay for it when your child leaves home to stay in a community with a high school. We can be very happy if the government can build a high school in this area"(Cibane club member, 21).*

### **Health services**

The Mavela women stated that the ward had one clinic serving a large population there. The clinic is located a considerable distance from the women's homes and is poorly equipped. The Mavela women agreed that the ward needed a second clinic to serve the large population and an improved ambulance service. The women were not satisfied with the treatment they received at the existing clinic. Patients were only treated by nurses, and these nurses were felt to be patronising. The Cibane women had one clinic which also lacked resources and equipment. But they were very happy to have a clinic.

*"We do have a clinic here but we are not satisfied because it is not well equipped. Sometimes they abuse us, because when you enter the clinic, the nurse will shout and shout at you and you end up regretting that you came to this place. They are really very harsh. Sometimes they don't give you even pills, they just say, they don't have them. There is only one clinic here, people far from it are really suffering, they go there and get shouted at by the nurses.... If you get injured on a week end, when you go there, they shout at you saying, go away, go away, we do not open on week ends. We only help badly injured people"(Mavela non-club member, 27).*

*"Sometimes when you go there and tell them your problem, they tell you to come back on a certain day, they are still going to order your pills. When you come on that day to fetch your pills, they tell you that your pills are lost, we can't find them, come the other day. We are really suffering here.... Even if you call an ambulance to come and fetch you, it takes two hours to arrive to your place, all this time you are dying of pains.... When you say you have a headache, they write down that you have back pains "(Mavela non-club member, 30).*

*"We do have a clinic here but it is far from our homes. We take a taxi to the clinic...Yes we do get help because if your child is sick, they transfer the child to big hospitals to get help. If we did not have this clinic, we would have been suffering here"(Mavela non-club member, 32).*

### **Personal safety**

Women reported a high rate of crime in their communities. One woman said that every time she went to sleep, she prayed to God to look after her at night, as she was not sure whether she would still be alive the next day. Women believed that crime was jeopardising the development process in the area. The women stated that the policemen were intimidated by criminals. If a woman reported a crime to the police, the suspect was released the next day and became a threat to the victim who had made the report.

The women had decided to be silent about crime because they feared for their lives. The women said that they constantly worried about their homes and possessions while they were working in their community gardens. The police were not effectively in control of crime in the area.

*"Policemen my child, it's like they do not exist. There is a police station here but policemen do not want to patrol this area at night because, we, people of Ndwedwe, kill them. So we really don't know how are we going to be developed because we kill the people who come here to help us because the policemen are here to save the community from criminals. We really need policemen"(Mavela club member, 1).*

*"My God. You see when you are here (in the community garden), you pray saying, God please help and look after me. There are many criminals in this area. (Others: Eyi there are many criminals here). I wish to go and live in another area. These criminals are two types; they want money and they want our bodies. Even if you are a very old woman, they want to rape us. As the sun sets, you try and collect yourself in one side. You put a butcher knife (*incelemba*) under the bed before you go to sleep and you do not even know if it is going to help you save your life from criminals. You pray to God before you go to sleep saying, God please take care of me and when you wake up in the morning, you also pray to God. Ndwedwe is really very bad"..... "I used to think that if policemen can go around this place, round about 9pm every night, maybe criminals will run away. But we live in farms, in deep remote areas, where criminals can hurt you and finish with you without the policemen noticing that" (Mavela club member, 7).*

*"Policemen are helpful because if you report a criminal, they arrest the person. But after a week, you see this person out of jail and this person will now become dangerous to you and to the policeman who arrested him. This is the problem we are faced with because we really need policemen in this area. Now we are afraid to call a policeman to rescue us from criminals, we just keep quiet and stay with them" (Mavela non-club member, 26).*

Cibane women had no policemen in their area at all. The 'police station' was used by the chief when holding meetings with local people on weekends. The women felt their lives were in danger because of the high crime rate in the area. In the week before the interview, a school teacher had been murdered.

*"We are not happy here my child, there are many criminals. Even in schools, the school teachers are being hurt by the criminals. They go to school and they threaten them. You see last week, we were burying a school teacher who was brutally murdered by the criminals at his home. He was beaten up by these criminals and left dead. They also cut his ear out and left a big hole. They also beat up his wife but she survived. Nobody knows who these criminals are, they live in the forest. Oh, we are tired of criminals" (Cibane non-club member, 19).*

*"Yes there are criminals, but the whole world has gone crazy. You find criminals everywhere. Even in townships, there are criminals"(Cibane non-club member, 23).*

### **Communication**

Poor communication with the outside world was a problem for the women. The Mavela women had telephones in their area but they had to book their calls through the post office.

*"We need good automatic telephones because the ones that we have here are the old telephones where you have to dial to the exchange and ask them to put you through to the number you want. Sometimes you wait for your call and when it comes, you hear a strange voice and you find that they have put you through to a wrong number "(Mavela non-club member, 30).*

At Cibane ward, there were no telephones at all. Some women wished to have telephones in their community in order to communicate with their husbands and family members working in the city. The women could not even write to them because they had no formal education.

*"We need telephones because we want to speak with our husbands in Durban and tell them what is happening at home"(Cibane club member, 21).*

*"In this area we do not have telephones, you can even die because if you try to shout louder calling your neighbour when you are in trouble at night, she or he cannot hear you because she must be sleeping and our homes are far from each other. So you can die"(Cibane club member, 22).*

### **Social activities**

For the Mavela women, a community hall and sports field were important development priorities. The women needed a venue to hold their meetings and the younger women needed a social meeting place



where local talent could be displayed in public. Cibane women had nothing to say about social activities. This was not one of their primary needs.

*"We need the community hall, we do not have it here. We like the music of the children from Mzobe family who are singing here. But they have lost interest now because they do not go anywhere with their talent, there is nobody to develop them up to the required standard. They have stopped because they cannot find a hall to sing for the people of this community. We like to support them in what they are doing. They go to Johannesburg and when they get there, they find criminals, doing their own things. So they cannot get help from cities"(Mavela non-club member, 27).*

*"We don't have playing grounds here to play net ball with people from other areas"(Mavela non-club member, 30).*

*"We also need community halls so that, as a youth, we can develop the community. We can do lots of things there, for instance, we have people who are singing here, others are dancers and they do all these things in schools and the school security sometimes lock the school gates saying that they do not want people coming there. We really need the community hall, this is the main thing, so that we can develop the community. We can sing, dance and do many things there showing our talents because many people here have the talent but because we don't have a place to show our talents, we stay home with the talent"(Mavela non-club member, 33).*

---

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

---

Case studies are by definition unique; the findings from case studies do not lend themselves readily to generalisation. However, lessons can be learnt which may apply elsewhere. The situational analysis of development needs reported here gives deep insight into the anatomy of two rural communities about two years after the new democratic government was installed. The analysis was essentially drawn up by women who were insiders and therefore gives a women's perspective

on rural livelihoods and development needs. Their views may approximate ones found in other rural and peri-urban areas of South Africa at this time.

Two central themes were developed in the course of the research: development needs and the empowerment of rural women. The literature attributes important roles to women in development in the home and community setting. The 40 women interviewed for this case study expressed pride in their key development roles in the family and community. In a number of cases the women reported that they had assumed the role of main breadwinner which is usually assigned to men.

The women had initiated a number of community projects to improve the quality of life in their wards. They felt that they were making the contributions to development in their communities which were within their capabilities. However, their efforts would be enhanced if the government were to improve the infrastructure in their communities.

### **Development needs**

Although Ndwedwe is about forty minutes drive from metropolitan Durban, it remains one of South Africa's underdeveloped tribal areas. The long list of development needs and priorities reported in the results above read like the anatomy of a rural community waiting for social upliftment. The women in the study were aware of the development backlog. They aspired to living conditions similar to those found in peri-urban and urban areas. Aspirations for improved services and infrastructure seemed to be fuelled by feelings of relative deprivation. As a woman from Cibane put it, "we want to live a better life, like other people". Substantial housing, piped water, and electricity in the home were considered essential to the well-being of the women and their families. The women were adamant that development should come to Ndwedwe; they did not wish to migrate to the city to improve their standard of living. The women were keen for industrial development and public works programmes to provide local jobs. They stated they would be willing to take any type of work

and would not shy away from heavy physical labour. The women wanted to stay on the land, which provided a modicum of security. Township life was expensive compared to tribal life and offered less security.

The study found that women in tribal areas have raised expectations for improved living conditions for themselves and their families. The women described the health hazards, hardships and economic disadvantages that they suffer in daily life due to the lack of modern amenities such as piped water, sanitation and electricity. Their argument for improving access to water and sanitation cited the health benefits for the women and their families. Although the women who had fled political violence and taken refuge in Ndwedwe described the area as peaceful, crime appeared to be a major problem in the area. Some women recommended street lighting as the solution to crime in their area.

Development priorities differed in the two wards under study. Levels of aspirations and current living standards appeared to play a role in shaping development priorities. The top development priorities of the Mavela women included improvements to roads, access to piped water at no installation cost, general electrification, post-matric and adult basic education, and employment opportunities. It was hoped that jobs would reduce crime and improve standards of living.

Further community development wishes were a community hall, adequate health facilities and skilled clinic staff. The Cibane women identified housing, safe drinking water, roads, secondary schools, employment opportunities, policemen, adequate health facilities and electricity as key development priorities.

A major dilemma for sustainable development emerged in the findings. The women aspired to an urban lifestyle in the country but without the financial burden that city dwellers must carry. Clearly, the women expected government subsidised services. In their opinion, poverty exempted them from paying for connection fees and similar costs.

## **Women's empowerment**

Turning to the subject of empowerment, the results suggest that women derive self-assurance from their successful community projects. This assurance, in turn, appears to make women more insistent in their demands for further assistance to achieve other development goals. Although the women from Mavela Ward already enjoyed a higher standard of housing and services than the women of Cibane, they appeared to be bolder in stating their demands for government intervention to improve living conditions in their community. The development needs identified by the women from Cibane tended to be more basic than those named by the Mavela women.

Women's clubs are often cited as vehicles for development in the literature. The study showed that both club and non-club members are involved in agricultural activities and grow similar crops for consumption and sale. Club members reported that agricultural produce yielded more profit than their baking and sewing projects. It appeared that the community projects initiated by the club members have not yet placed them in a better position than other women. The study did not show any difference between club and non club members with regard to the role they play in development.

The study found that the women from the Mavela Ward, who were older on average, tended to feel more empowered than the younger women living in Cibane Ward. Additional pension income may have played a role in the greater self-confidence of some of the Mavela women. The additional advantage of location may have influenced the positive outcome of their community gardening project.

Nevertheless, the gains reported by the Mavela women from their gardening were definitely superior to those achieved by the Cibane women. The former produced vegetables for sale as well as for home consumption. The women rated their gardening project as more successful than other projects they had tried because it required a lower level of initial capital input and was less expensive to sustain.

The Cibane women felt that their community garden project was not yet a success. They said the Department of Agriculture had failed to provide sufficient agricultural support services after initiating the project in the ward. The initial sense of failure had also had a negative effect on the spirit of co-operation among the women, which was essential for the project. Nevertheless, some of the Cibane women were confident that technical assistance from the Department of Agriculture and capital injections would solve many of the teething problems they had experienced to date with their community project. They were also despondent because their past applications to government had met deaf ears. They had requested assistance with jobs, so that they could earn the funds necessary to build proper houses.

The findings taken together suggest that development needs to be holistic, in the sense that it touches many parts of life, in order to achieve optimal results in empowering women. Although the Mavela women felt they were coping well enough with their gardening and selling activities, they still felt they were overworked and exploited. Carrying water to their garden sapped their strength. They were forced to sell their produce for poor prices. Furthermore, the gains in self-confidence achieved through their gardening project were undermined in other spheres of life. The Mavela women reported that they were treated in a patronising fashion by the nurses in the local clinic.

In conclusion, the case study of women in Mavela and Cibane shows that women have important roles to play in development and that they are willing to play their part. The women are empowered by the success of their development projects. However, they also believe that they receive insufficient support from government for their efforts to have a major impact on the level of living in their communities. They look to government to receive the assistance that they feel is their due.

---

## NOTES

---

1. Individual participants are identified by the numbers 1 to 40 in this excerpt from the interviews and the ones to follow.

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Bryceson, DF (1995) *Women Wielding the Hoe*, Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Budlender, D (1991) *Conference on women and gender in Southern Africa: women and economy*, Durban: University of Natal.
- Charlton, SEM (1984) *Women in Third World Development*, London: Westview Press.
- Friedman, M (1989) *Gender and Development: Literature review*, Institute of Natural Resources, Occasional Paper 23. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal.
- Government Gazette (1995) *Rural Development Strategy of the Government of National Unity*, Pretoria.
- Green, JM and Spalding, SL (1992) *Zenzele Women's Association: Family Resource Allocation and Participation Patterns*. Pretoria: Human Science Research Council.
- Hirshman, M (1995) Women and development: A critique, in Marchand, MH and Parpart, JL (eds) *Feminism/ Postmodernism/ Development*, London: Routledge.
- Jali, JB (1996) *Strategic Planning and Transformation of Agricultural Extension Service in Ndwedwe District*, KwaZulu Natal: Department of Agriculture.
- Krueger, RA (1988) *Focus Groups. A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, London: Sage Publishers.
- Ministry in the Office of the President, (1995) *Key Indicators of Poverty in South Africa*. Pretoria: South African Communication Service.
- Moghadam, V.M (1992) Development and women's emancipation: Is there a Connection. *Development and Change*, 23(3) pp215 - 255.
- Murphy, C (1991) *Gender and women in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal.
- Pala, AO (1976) *African Women in Rural Development: Research Trends and Priorities*, Kenya: University of Nairobi.
- Parpart, JL (1993) A post-modern feminist critique of women and development: theory and practice, *Development and Change*, 24(3) pp439 - 464.

Patel, Z (1996) *Women and environmental management*, Agenda 29,  
Women and Environment, pp 66-71.  
The World Bank (1990) *Women in Development*, United States of  
America: Washington D.C.



This work is licensed under a  
Creative Commons  
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 3.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs  
<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/>